How to Homeschool a Preschooler

Choosing to homeschool your preschooler is a great way to be directly involved in your child’s education. You are able to control what your child learns and how they learn it. By creating a learning environment and lessons that develop important early childhood development skills, you may be able to teach your child how to learn, think, and communicate effectively. Additionally, remember to involve your child in social activities outside of the home regularly.

Method 1 Creating a Learning Environment

1 **Develop a healthy routine.** Developing a routine for your child is fundamental. Routines instill security, structure, and self-discipline in your child. Create a schedule for your child. The schedule should outline times for waking up, eating, learning, napping, playing, and sleeping. You can also include things you need to accomplish like chores, prepping for meals, and cleaning.[1]

- You should dedicate at least 30 minutes to each of these activities. For example, 30 minutes for making breakfast, 30 minutes for eating, and 30 minutes for learning. Of course, adjust the schedule to your and your child's needs. It may take longer to prep a meal, for example.
- Be sure to schedule times for daily reading. These times can be in the morning when your child first wakes up, or at night before bedtime.

2 **Create short lessons.** Children have short attention spans. Develop short 30-minute sessions that are broken down into 10-minute intervals. For example, if you have a speech and language lesson planned, set aside 10 minutes for practicing the ABC’s, 10 minutes for reading a book, and 10 minutes for naming animals. You can plan two 30-minute sessions per day, i.e., a session for the morning and a session for the afternoon.[2]

- Depending on your child’s age, these lessons can be shorter or longer. For example, if your child is younger, like 2 or 3, try out 20-minute lesson plans. If your child starts to become frustrated or bored, perhaps ending the lesson early is a good idea.

3 **Get support.** When developing your child’s lesson plans and activities, remember that there are resources out there to help you. For example, you can join a homeschool co-op in your local community or online. These co-ops are great for getting feedback and advice from other parents who homeschool their children, especially if you are a first-timer.[3]

- There are also local homeschool expos you can attend. These expos are usually regional, so plan ahead so you and your child can attend. Expos offer exhibitions, speakers, and workshops for you or your child to attend.[4]

Method 2 Teaching Your Child Problem Solving Skills

1 **Do puzzles together.** Cognitive development skills are important skills to master. These skills include learning and problem solving. Puzzles are a great way to teach your child problem solving skills. Buy an age-appropriate puzzle and help your child figure out how the pieces fit together. As you put the puzzle together, talk to your child about what you see. For example, "This is a pig. Where will the pig fit in the puzzle?"

2 **Play with Legos.** Legos are another great way to develop problem solving skills, like how things build on top of each other. Show your child how the Legos fit together first. Then ask them to repeat what you just did. As your

child plays with the legos, ask them to identify the colors of the Legos as they put them together.[5]

3 **Use colored blocks.** Colored blocks are a great way to teach your child cognitive skills, like learning to match shapes. Ask your child to organize the blocks by shape or by color. You can practice by showing your child how to organize the blocks based on shape or color first. Then, ask your child to repeat the process. You can also ask your child to name the shapes as they group them together.[6]

Method 3 Developing Your Child's Language Skills

1 **Teach your child the ABC's.** Speech and language skills are important for your child's development. You can start developing these skills by teaching your child the basic ABC's. Your child should be able to recognize letters (upper and lower case), their sounds, and be able to identify them. You can start by pasting images of the letters to a big poster board. You can also paste images of things that start with the letter. For example, for the letter C you can paste an image of a cat next to the letter. You can even add a physical component by asking your child to meow like a cat.[7]

2 **Name animals or parts of the body.** By naming animals and parts of the body, you can develop your child's language skills, as well as their science skills. Associate each part of the body or an animal with a specific letter. For example, "L" is for "Leg," and have them point to their leg. Do this for all major body parts, like their nose, mouth, hands, and feet.

3 **Teach your child to count to 20.** You can do this by creating a board, like the one for the ABC's. Next to each number, you can use physical objects to represent their amounts. For example, you can glue 3 pennies next to the number three, or glue 4 macaroni noodles next to the number 4.[8]

- Also teach your child how to recognize different amounts, like, for example, that 4 is more than 3. Do this by counting each amount and explaining to them which is more and which is less. For example, count each penny one by one, then count each macaroni one by one. Direct their attention to the fact that because there is one more macaroni, 4 is bigger than 3.

Method 4 Encouraging Positive Emotional Development

1 **Create an emotion board.** Encourage positive emotional development by asking your child to describe their feelings. You can do this by creating an emotion board with attachable faces expressing different emotions that your child can stick to the board. Tell your child that at any time throughout the day they can choose to put a face on the chart describing how they feel.

- Validate your child's feelings by reflecting their emotions back to them; your tone of voice is very important when doing this exercise. For example, if your child is excited or happy tell them in an excited tone with a smile, "That made you very happy!"[9]

2 **Have your child choose their own outfits.** Teach independence by encouraging your child to choose their own outfits. Also encourage your child to dress themselves once they have chosen an outfit.

- You can also encourage independence by teaching your child how to clean up after themselves. After you have finished each activity, practice putting things back in their designated places.
- You can even have your child help you clean the dishes after you have finished eating. Or, have them participate in doing the daily chores, like picking up dirty clothes and putting them in the hamper.

3 **Play Simon Says.** Teach your child to follow instructions by playing Simon Says. You can also develop your child's instructional skills by having them practice waiting and taking turns. Board games, like Chutes and Ladders and Candy Land, are a great way to practice patience, understanding instructions, and waiting to take turns.[10]

Method 5 Mastering Your Child's Fine Motor Skills

1 **Paint and draw.** Include activities in your lesson plan that help your child develop their fine motor skills, i.e., holding objects and hand-eye coordination. Activities that develop fine motor skills are drawing, scribbling and painting. It is also important to teach your child how to hold an object the right way, as well. Teach your child how to hold a pencil or a paintbrush in their hand.

2 **Cut shapes.** You can also develop your child's hand-eye coordination by cutting shapes along lines. Draw lines on colored paper for your child to follow and cut along. You can also draw circles, squares, and triangles for your child to cut.[11]

- If your child is younger, use child safety scissors to cut the shapes.

3 **Play sports.** You can develop your child's fine motor skills by teaching them to kick and throw balls. This is a fun activity to do outside, and to teach your child the importance of exercise. Kick the ball back and forth with your child. You can also set up cones, similar to a soccer goal, and have your child kick the ball between the cones.

4 **Schedule playtime.** Playtime is just as important as lesson time. Playtime offers your child an unstructured setting where they can develop a sense of independence, explore their interests, and develop confidence. Playtime also promotes creativity, which is essential for developing intellectual capacities.[12]

- The amount of playtime your child gets should proportional to the amount of time your child spends learning. For example, if you have an hour of lessons planned, make sure your child gets at least 30 minutes, if not an hour, of playtime each day.

Method 6 Socializing Your Homeschooled Child

1 **Go the park regularly.** You also want to develop your child’s social skills. Go to the park regularly so that your child can interact with other children. You can try going to different parks each week or every two weeks so that your child can interact with children from diverse backgrounds.

2 **Join a playgroup.** A playgroup is a regular, relaxed meeting for groups of children while their parents socialize. It is a great way for children to learn new ways to play, and for parents to meet others in their community and make new friends. Try to meet with a playgroup at least twice a month.[13]

- You can find playgroups through your community, religious institution, and local daycare centers.

3 **Visit the library.** Visiting the library is a great opportunity for your child to meet other children and to practice their reading and listening skills. Libraries usually have scheduled reading times for children, as well as monthly and weekly activities for your child to participate in. Contact your local library for a schedule of reading times and weekly activities your child can participate in.

Tips

- Now is a good time to introduce a foreign language, if it is one you speak fluently and can maintain teaching.
- Provide games and lessons that foster creative thought. Intellectual flexibility and enthusiasm are critical for successful homeschooling.
- Be sure to move at your child's own pace. Some children are faster or slower at picking up particular skills or information.
- Involve your child in your day to day activities. Letting your child help with household chores and errands is a great way to teach emotional and social skills.

Sources and Citations

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